

VZCZCXRO6355  
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV  
DE RUEHCV #1449/01 2891600  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 151600Z OCT 08  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1980  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001449

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ BLASTS POLITICAL ALLIES AND ZULIA OPPOSITION

CARACAS 00001449 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ  
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

11. (C) Summary: During campaign stops in three states October 11-13, President Chavez vociferously attacked both key opposition leaders and two pro-government allied parties. Despite his pledge not to air his weekly "Alo, Presidente" TV show, he used an obligatory two-hour "cadena" broadcast on Sunday to campaign alongside PSUV candidate Gian Carlo Di Martino, who is running for the governorship of Zulia in a tight race. Chavez also pledged to "erase" the pro-government Patria Para Todos (PPT) and Communist (PCV) parties off the political map for supporting dissident candidates. Chavez's vitriolic rhetoric and revival of assassination plot accusations suggests he is once again seeking to polarize the November 23 state and local elections, framing them as a referendum on his physical and political survival. End Summary.

-----  
CHAVEZ INSULTS ALLIES AND OPPOSITION LEADERS  
-----

12. (SBU) In Trujillo State on October 11, Chavez campaigned alongside PSUV gubernatorial candidate Hugo Cabezas, who is running in a three-way race that includes Octavio Mejias, a PSUV dissident running with the support of PPT and the PCV. Chavez told supporters at a rally that he no longer recognized or wanted anything to do with the PPT and PCV leadership, his erstwhile "patriotic alliance" partners. Chavez announced that he wants to "erase (them) off the map" and called Mejias a "deserter." Nevertheless, he called out to the PCV base, asking those who are "honest" to support Cabezas, lauding the examples of PPT-turned-PSUV leaders Aristobulo Izturiz, the PSUV candidate for the Caracas mayorship, and Alberto Muller Rojas, Vice President of the PSUV.

13. (SBU) Although Chavez maintained his commitment to the National Electoral Council (CNE) not to televise his weekly "Alo, Presidente" show on October 12, he monopolized television and radio air time for roughly two hours with an obligatory "cadena" broadcast from Zulia state to inaugurate a school and an aqueduct. During the rally, Chavez called the state's opposition gubernatorial candidate Pablo Perez an "imbecile who doesn't even know how to speak," and compared him to Bernardo, the mute sidekick from the popular "Zorro" TV series, an allusion to his close relationship to current Zulia governor Manuel Rosales. Chavez also attacked Rosales -- who is running for the mayorship of Maracaibo -- calling him a "wretch, bandit, mafioso, and assassin." The same day via state radio, Chavez pledged that he would sue Rosales for

defamation and injury, telling the Presidential Judicial Office to investigate the governor for alleged "ill-gotten gains" while in office.

14. (C) Venezuelan special police (DISIP) arrested three university students during the televised event after getting close to the stage to take pictures. Although they were wearing red state oil company (PDVSA) t-shirts, representatives from Rosales' Un Nuevo Tiempo party acknowledged that they were party members disguised as Chavistas carrying out "normal intelligence functions" on behalf of the party. Their arrest has received widespread media attention, and is likely to feed into Chavez's ongoing claims of an opposition-sponsored assassination plot in the making. DISIP transferred the students to Caracas on October 13.

-----  
OPPOSITION, DISSIDENTS REACT  
-----

15. (SBU) Manuel Rosales responded on Monday by calling Chavez a "lunatic" who should "double his dosage" of Tranxen (an anti-anxiety medication), asserting that the President is "openly losing the elections and knows it." Jose Alborno, secretary general of the PPT, condemned Chavez's attacks on his party, claiming they were reminiscent of Joseph Stalin and demanding that the President be more respectful and considerate. Alborno also stated that the PPT and PSUV had agreed to run separately in areas where the PPT thought their candidate was viable. He pledged that the PPT will continue running its candidates, despite Chavez's threats. Opposition journalist Rafael Poleo called a Globovision news program on October 12 and said Chavez could end up "hanged" like Mussolini. The following day, Minister of Communication and

CARACAS 00001449 002.2 OF 002

Information Andres Izarra accused pro-opposition media outlet Globovision of openly supporting a plot against Chavez.

16. (C) PCV secretary general Oscar Figuera on October 13 called Chavez's attacks "unjust" and protested that "nobody is more socialist than the PCV," advising the President that he should not abuse terms like "counterrevolutionary" lest they lose their importance and credibility. Nevertheless, Figuera announced that the party would continue supporting PSUV candidates because they oppose the "enemies of the revolutionary process, namely imperialism, the oligarchy, and reformism." Regarding Chavez's threat to "erase" the party from the political map, Figuera told pro-government daily VEA that the PCV is like a "leather hide, when you step on one side, the other side jumps up with more force."

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

18. (C) Chavez appears to be trying to recreate his favored electoral conditions, polarizing the Venezuelan public by labeling any who does not fall into line with his PSUV as traitors and conspirators. He continues to try to frame the November 23 gubernatorial and mayoral elections as a plebiscite on him, rather than electoral contests between the actual candidates. He is also actively trying to focus public and media attention on his continued survival, rather than pressing local issues. Poleo's reactionary comments play into Chavez's efforts to provoke the opposition into a confrontation -- further polarizing the electoral battleground. In several states, the PPT has a strong electoral base and is well-respected as a serious party, suggesting that its leadership may be confident of going it alone without Chavez's support or preparing for an eventual break with the BRV. End Comment.

CAULFIELD